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ABSTRACT

Socialization literature focuses on family, marriage, and children's growth characteristics, with little attention given to professional socialization--a deficiency hindering the effectiveness of many beginning administrators. A common research thread pinpoints the influence of culturally consistent adults; the aspiring administrator exposed to professionally honorable professors and mentors will supposedly prefer to become an honorable professional striving to perform work honorably and gracefully. This contemplative essay consider the possible connections between an academic department in educational administration and administrators' career expectations. Following a literature review and a summary of theories and definitions, professional performances acceptable to peers and congruent with educational administration's values are explored as basic to understanding professional community concepts. Some specific influences of work settings, models, and mentors are explored. Limitations on innovation are identified as one realistic aspect of job conflict and ambiguity. Finally, a comprehensive approach to professional socialization as a pervasive component of graduate study in educational administration is proposed. Professional socialization should be prospective, rather than retrospective or accidental. Included are 12 references. (MLH)

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Developing Professional Socialization in Educational Administration

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ABSTRACT

The socialization of individuals into a work force has had very modest attention, with that lack providing surprises which cut effectiveness of many beginning school administrators. Professional performances that will be acceptable to peers and also fulfill the values model held by every educational administrator are explored as basic to understanding the concepts of the professional community. Some specific influences of work settings, models and mentors are explored. Limitations on innovation are identified as one realistic aspect of job conflict and ambiguity. It is proposed that a comprehensive approach to professional socialization should be a pervasive part of graduate study in educational administration.

Developing Professional Socialization in Educational Administration

Introduction

Socialization in an academic department of educational administration and supervision in an urban setting may be manifested in many ways. It may include one or all of the following: companionship, development of relationships, interaction, awareness of limits, mutual concerns, perceived membership, and camaraderie. These are all things that tend to occur in groups and communities, and apply to professors and practitioners, alike. Togetherness is a part of socialization; however, educational administration is a high tension endeavor, featuring many environmental ambiguities, and those ambiguities include personal perspectives that disrupt socialization; e.g., competition, distrust, jealousy, misunderstanding, and disdain. Those personal aspects must be harnessed as one part of professional development. If not, they are obvious limitations on professional socialization. Socialization, then, is one aspect of professional development for school administrators, but it must be recognized that it is in the nature of professional socialization to evade precise definition---breadth of understanding is part of it.

The setting for school administration must be considered. For over twenty centuries, increasingly specialized and sophisticated organizations have been invented. American schools represent a very sophisticated endeavor. A strong but subconscious worker's code has incorporated both imitation and variation. Part of professional socialization rests upon historical antecedents, and those are often intellectually and culturally fragile items. Many of the fears that haunt professional workers must be overcome, calling for confidence in peers and self. The school must be embraced as a worthwhile endeavor, with all workers engaged at honorable levels of effort and effectiveness. The reason for schools is in the "product," the students who are there, and that must be the focus of the endeavor, but it must be recognized as a changing endeavor. Awareness of that focus among the school's workers allows for intensification and unity of effort. Such considerations must be a part of professional socialization.

The preponderance of the literature devoted to the topic of socialization is devoted to family, marriage, and growth characteristics in children. Much less literature is devoted to professional socialization. From that greater bulk, a common thread in much of the research into socialization pinpoints the influence of culturally consistent adults. Transposed, that common thread seems to say that aspiring educational administrators, exposed to professors and mentors who are professionally honorable, will themselves prefer to become honorable professionals; and, a substantial part of professional socialization

must include understanding in which work is done with honor. There is power in gentleness and seriousness. Gracefulness can be a part of administrative work in schools. After all, administration is both science and art. This is a contemplative essay which considers the connections that may be made between an academic department in educational administration and career expectations.

Literature and Discussion

Although there is not an extensive literature, it is appropriate to note that some scholarly attention has been delivered to professional socialization. From a specialist in the sociology of education (Weidman, 1987), a current analysis of literature on the topic of socialization has been developed that has broad applicability in educational administration. The analysis turns to a synthesis with helpful suggestions on the role played by an educational institution in the socialization of students while continuing to recognize the powerful role played by parents early in the socialization of their offspring. It was the field research of Becker and Associates (1961) within the medical profession that revealed much of the professional maturation, the development of expectations and values which formed a substantial part of the medical education in one institution as those students were observed over a two year period. That group included no one who did not expect to become a practicing physician, in itself one characteristic at contrast with any group of students in educational administration---some of whom have, at best, a casual anticipation of someday working as a

school administrator. It may be that the most fertile area for learning about socialization and translating that into professional socialization can be found in the field research of such pioneers and leaders as William F. White, Ruth Horowitz, Robert and Helen Lynd and W. Lloyd Warner, for those writers all speak clearly about group identification, about active and passive participation in the group, and about acceptable behavior within the group.

Internalizing norms of behavior as seen among professional practitioners may not be all good. Merton (1959) indicated that the imposition of rules, characterized by the format of a bureaucracy, could induce a formal and rigid response in individuals in the organization. That is, individuals would see the rules of the organization as narrow and heavy handed, and would respond by the narrowest interpretation, a self protection device. Such a worker characteristic reduces an organization's flexibility and problem solving capability, but may enhance the worker's feelings of security, which is, itself, an attraction. Yet, organizational vitality and creativity is sapped by such worker attitudes.

Taylor and Moghaddam (1987) provided a broad discussion of socialization as they discussed theories, models and attitudes. Their discussions of what they called realistic conflict theory and social identity theory are especially useful in the considerations of how educational administrators become socialized. In treating such topics as decision making and roles in organizations, Gorton (1987) provided a much more specific treatment of

professional socialization for school administrators, pointing out at one place that some research has shown a tendency for chief school administrators to accept the influence of non-ethical considerations when making critical decisions. That is, administrators may sometimes act in a survival mode which has only incidental connections to ethical groundings as they put maintenance in position as first priority.

Harragan (1977) discussed socialization from the parallel of athletics. She posited that the team play of athletic teams is an important part of socialization; cultural and ethical aspects of cooperation and competition are parts of the whole endeavor. A person must find his/her place as an individual within a collective. This is true for participation in athletic teams from childhood on. Some of the lessons learned about rules and consideration while in team settings may be helpful in the formation of socially acceptable leadership skills---at the same time, other, less positive lessons may be learned. For example, rule breaking and penalties is one lesson; rule breaking and winning may be another. In either condition, awareness of limits is a central part of socialization. The concept of team as an experience background for professional socialization has been examined by other authors, too. Discussing socialization from a specific vantage point within educational administration, Hoy and Miskel (1987) focused upon the influence which came to administrators from the bureaucracy. Especially, they focused upon the constricting aspects of the bureaucracy, and pointed out the usefulness of the models developed earlier in which Getzels

and Guba delineated the relationships of role, personality, and experience.

Still, in terms of diminishing the shock of beginning to work as a school administrator, in order to speak to the under-appreciation of the politics and culture of the work setting, other researchers and writers are necessary to provide a balance in viewpoints. Clark and McKibbin (1982) proposed that organizational bureaucracy and the narrowness associated with it is on the wane, that school leaders were moving toward more flexible stances, more pluralistic understandings of organizational operation. Further, they suggested that conventional rational models for decision making were not really good fits for educational organizations. Viewing school leadership at the building level, Barth (1987) argues for sharing leadership by way of dividing tasks with teachers---individually and in groups---taking on major organizational responsibilities. For Barth, a big part of socialization among school administrators would be devotion to empowering teachers, providing leadership opportunities that will make teachers feel good about their work. Principals, as authority leaders in the schools, have the power for such delegation---which does call for continuous monitoring, a slightly different kind of job function.

In the broadest sense, socialization "is a process through which culture is transmitted to new members of a society." Members---of any society---tend to share ways of thinking, behaving and feeling, and probably believe that their ways are best. This behavior pattern may include, on some occasions,

rejection of "outsiders," as well as acceptance of conformity (Shepard and Voss, 1978). Behavior norms are learned as appropriate to certain groups at certain times. It is through the acquisition of group norms that individuals enhance the effectiveness of their behavior as they act in concert with others. In learning what is appropriate, some trial and error may be used. Some events may be disappointing, even humiliating, until group routines are accepted and learned. The audiences, the observing peers, are in place; and with fixed expectations. For individuals who decline to act within observable boundaries, sanctions are likely (Shibutani, 1986). The applications in a single occupation setting, such as school administration, are clear.

From the literature and from long term engagement in the field of educational administration, a congruence of characteristics of professional socialization---as presented in the literature and as observed in the field---emerges. Caring is paramount. Other elements, seen in the literature, such as demonstrating, courtesy, collegiality, and membership, are also seen among practitioners---with effectiveness and awareness at some variance.

Commentary

Caring is a major part of professional socialization. It is part of the repertoire of every good school leader and, in intensity, a part which distinguishes leaders in schools from leaders in other organizations. If, in dealing with part-time students, it is hard to develop fully desirable aspects of concern and caring because of the difficulty in forming cohort groups,

peer groups, and so on, it is certainly possible for professors to model concerned behavior. Professors have the opportunity do demonstrate that caring, for example, is not a random or accidental happening; rather, it is an intentionally cultivated part of the professional repertoire. Likewise, it should be possible for professors to see, on occasion, some of that same caring behavior demonstrated by graduate students of educational administration, evidence of part of their growth, their professional socialization. It should be a natural, inevitable, and continuing follow-on of what happened as they prepared to become classroom teachers.

Professors must make it their business to be in practitioner groups, to know about such groups, and encourage them. This is part of environmental scanning, a basic professional technique. The valuable contributions of professors in those groups should be of two kinds: one, to carry out their charge as the persons who are in organizations where they have time to think, research, and consider; two, facilitate the socialization of the practitioners making up the group in which the professors have joined. Because professional socialization is somewhat dependent upon barrier smashing, those professors can also act to indicate that there is no hierarchy in educational administration, professors above practitioners, or vice-versa. Demonstrating collegiality as a part of professional socialization has a value, too.

Numerous conversations with both practitioners and professors have focused on the concept of protection. Is protection of peers---and of self---a reasonable and necessary part of

professional socialization? Without bothering to explore meanings of the term, we have encountered an immediate and negative reaction to the term. If any rational explanation accompanied such strong aversions to the term, it was that other people---"outsiders"---viewing educational administration as an occupational category should not receive any impression that a mutual protection society is operating. Protectionism embodies a concept that sounds like an attempt to hide incompetence. However, a protected condition is one in which support is provided to administrators as they engage decision making, and stand, publicly exposed, as the person(s) who made the decision which inevitably produced an adverse condition for someone. In fact, the decisional quality may be low sometimes, failing on some legitimate criteria; yet, many attacks are made upon administrators when decisional quality is high, questioning those decisions and having only self interest as the motive for the attack. Administrators are lighting rods in a storm and protected conditions are part of the workplace, but that is less than half the story. This must not be extended in practice to mean acceptance of ineffective and inefficient work. Indignation at malperformance is one part of professional socialization.

Another part of professional socialization is acting with courtesy toward others. Professors of educational administration should have that incorporated into their own behaviors, showing respect and courtesy toward their graduate students. Courteous words and actions should be common in their repertoire; arrogance and presumed superiority should be out. This is not an exploration

of teaching strategies, but only a very brief comment to call attention to the fact that the mentor's role and teaching strategies can be a happy mix, based on a clear rationale to assist students in their professional socialization.

There is no clear philosophical/theoretical base for increasing and enhancing socialization between professor and student, and between practitioner and practitioner. An eclectic approach to understanding, teaching, and learning prevails. It may have occurred more as a matter of chance than by way of any structured and planned curriculum for graduate students, or by way of intentional, goal-oriented plans developed by practitioners. Graduate programs should include an intentional awareness of professional socialization.

Preparing to enter specific occupational areas of the world of work, persons studying professional areas are expected to look ahead. Looking ahead, observing performers, and considering what they do is all part of career choice and development. Ideas about standards and attitudes of idealism and cynicism play a part. Although this initial projection may be a primitive part of professional socialization, a realization of the opportunities and obligations begins to build in a person's mind. That realization may be just what is needed to confirm a decision to proceed in studying some particular kind of work. Generally, this was part of what Becker and Associates attempted to discover and describe while doing that research among those medical students in the latter 1950s and early 1960s.

Presumably, all graduate students, being in their place voluntarily, attend with some expectation of being changed in any of several ways. A survey adapted (O'Reilly, 1987) from Becker and Associates was administered to fifty-four students, a group composed of completing masters degree people and post masters people at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. The central question for these UNO students of the 1980s was, "What is your idea of a successful school administrator?" Respondents used a five point scale in indicating choices in the six categories that were adapted from Becker. The relatively high importance accorded to work relationships by these students of educational administration is noteworthy, and five categories emerge with a clear legitimation in the student's eyes. Shared and accepted legitimation is a part of socialization, becoming a base from which to decide how to do the right thing.

In another question, these students ranked six categories of success as perceived among successful school administrators. The same categories had been ranked by medical students. The two groups differed markedly in their perspectives on work relationships, an item of decidedly nominal concern to the medical students. The same is true for respect accorded for work done. The medical students showed an independence, a separation from concern toward other workers, and an expectation that those other workers, fellow workers in medicine, would demonstrate a concern, respectful attitude toward them. The data indicated that skill and knowledge were judged to be of different dimensions between

the two groups. Of the medical students, 57 percent thought it to be the most important characteristic of successful practicing administrators. To the extent that professional socialization is influenced and formed by looking forward over time, some central performance categories are revealed in these surveys of post baccalaureate students in two different occupational categories. Most obviously, there are several substantial differences as the students decided what constituted successful performance characteristics, separating the two fields of work. Inter-occupational comparisons of how institutions help build professional socialization must be accepted with some reservations.

There are several ambiguous or conflicting conditions that create difficulties when attempts are made to raise the consciousness of educational administrators, centered upon professional socialization. Holding and internalizing certain values---and rejecting or reducing others---is an important aspect of the whole competency which must include professional socialization. The ethical, legal, or political values that are incorporated into professional socialization are parts of a very complex mix. Time may also become an important, but outside, variable bearing upon decision making. The antennae of school leaders must pick up from many directions, but action lines can follow central features of socialization, already discussed, as a desirable and rational grounding.

Other complexities emerge from the "separation" of theory and practice. In much professional literature, a kind of polarity

exists. For some, theory, philosophy and research are, really, one; practice, then, becomes another and separated aspect of understanding educational administration. Part of that separation rests upon a mutual disparagement of efforts made by people who are predominantly inclined toward one end of that continuum or the other. It is hard to understand how educational administration, considered as art or science, considered as practice or research, can prosper as an increasingly well understood function in a major institution of American society when many individuals and some groups continue to sharpshoot and belittle within the larger group of persons working to enhance the effectiveness of leadership in schools. That is, who can be trusted? How can restraint and respect be ingrained as part of socialization?

Of course there is disorder within the house. That is true of every occupational category, of every work group. Whether self flagellation, done publicly, is the cure for maladministration of schools is debatable. A public that is told, repeatedly and emphatically, of failures within the house may find it hard to generate confidence for continuation. What other group of workers has been or is now so intent on improvement through criticism that it is willing to risk the loss of trust from the larger society? Internal criticism which lacks for discretion, for judgment and tolerance, may carry with it the greatest factor of self defeat.

Observers and commentators on the educational enterprise include fair numbers whose concept of change, of progress, demands the dropping of bombs. Often, those people follow a route set by their own beliefs and values and a high self confidence. Their

role is to be an aggressive and impatient person. Engaging environmental scanning, and facing such a deluge of arrows, it is easy to see why educational administrators might let mutual welfare concerns deteriorate into a crass protectionism. Again, it is a matter of balance, for the part of professional socialization which includes companionship and caring, projects that carry right on to the children in the schools---and they are entitled to protection from poor school administration.

Conclusions and Questions

At the center of the concept of professional socialization is the idea that persons can, by study and thought, come to a point in development where regulation of behavior becomes a personal matter, an internal concern. This professional person must be so in command of the knowledge base appropriate to the work, so aware of the environment in which the work is performed, so true to the ideals of cultured humanity, and so on, that society can trust the person to do the work, correctly, and without outside interference. Of course, that is an idealized situation which allows for no interference from the outside. But school administrators work in a setting of social interaction, and often, social conflict. Certificates and licenses are, in some degree, public votes of confidence---and part of socialization is a balancing act, carried on among contending, conflicting forces, done so well that some acceptance will be the result.

Socialization literature typically includes some particular author's concept of appropriate roles and relationships; i.e.,

explanations carry the message of inevitable conditions that are dictated by growth, gender, age, and so on. This seems to be a too simple explanation of socialization, ignoring external conditions that cause stress and discrepancy when, for some reasons, distance between goals and means of goal attainment increases. Stress may call for, occasionally, substantial deviation from the most acceptable performance norms. Simplified explanations tend to exclude attention to differences in social constraints on high and low social status persons. Economics, then, is surely one prime example of an external factor bearing upon professional socialization. A global perspective is another. When socialization is considered as a social regulatory system, economics and other external factors must be incorporated into plans for the socialization of practicing educational administrators. Even such a brief discussion gives rise to a series of questions about the degree of socialization that can become a part of professional development and regulation, and that includes the following:

1. What are the norms, what are the standards and boundaries within which educational administrators must function?
2. Are there really agreed upon and integrated norms, or is there a span of beliefs that is so broad that it might be called a pluralistic dissensus?
3. If deviations from a central performance theme do not include such extreme examples as criminal behavior or psychological abnormality, what degree of deviation is tolerable and should be accepted by professional colleagues?
4. If socialization might include such a specific as professional enculturation, and if professional groups maintain their own socialized norms, can such a group still effectively police its own ranks? When professional

norms are violated, can a group muster enough ethical strength to police its own, and still emerge as a socialized group?

5. Does the experience of such self-policing groups as the attorneys and physicians indicate a desirable model for educational administrators?

6. Should some such model be put in place while the individuals are still graduate students, with professors as mentors, and with the full intention of carryover into later professional life?

Despite the many questions which remain, it must be acknowledged that everyone becomes socialized to their profession. For some, it is random and accidental; for some it is more or less honorable, more or less productive for both the individual and for society. In this process, people make sense of their work. It involves rationalizing. We propose that it should be prospective rather than retrospective. We propose intervention by a conscious consideration of self in place, by awareness of norms, and by professors demonstrating.

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